

**The Papers of General Nathanael Greene. Vol. I: December
1766–December 1776**

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period. It is a topical analysis, which includes such subjects as agriculture, hunting, and trading (not to mention the just discussed animal management). In Part II Jennings uses colonial New England as a case study to show the tumultuous, sometimes terribly violent, relationship between Indians and colonists. His assessment of Puritan motives differs significantly from those of Alden T. Vaughan and Douglas Edward Leach, both of whom he feels viewed white-Indian relations from the Puritan perspective and equated Indian culture with savagery.

Of the two parts the first is by far the most stimulating. Jennings provides information that is both thought-provoking and exciting. His observations do much to shatter the old, popular stereotype of Eastern woodland Indians as nomadic hunters. Trading, for instance, was for them a universal experience. "Only one tribe in all of North America has ever been discovered that did not possess objects obtained through trade with other tribes; the exception was the Polar Eskimos, who lived so isolated an existence that they believed themselves to be the only people on earth." He convincingly demonstrates the national and international ramifications of the quest for fur. It was the basis for both commerce and industry; the careful preparation of skins by Indian women justifies the latter term. And agriculture was important too. The Narragansett tribe of Rhode Island cleared twice as much ground as they planted, so they could practice crop rotation. The Hurons of the Great Lakes used surplus corn in their trade with tribes in northern Canada. Early colonists from Europe "uniformly" depended upon Indian surpluses for survival.

Jennings' book is a well-written, documented study, providing the reader with an ethnohistorian's viewpoint concerning Indian-white relations in Colonial America. Unfortunately, Jennings' treatment of the Indians is much more judicious and convincing than his handling of their European adversaries.

—Robert W. Larson
University of Northern Colorado

The Papers of General Nathanael Greene. Vol. I: December 1766—December 1776, edited by Richard K. Showman, Margaret Cobb, and Robert E. McCarthy. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press for the Rhode Island Historical Society, 1976. pp. lvi, 411. Maps, notes, illustrations, index. \$17.95.

Scholars concerned with the biography of Nathanael Greene have had to rely, heretofore, on less than satisfactory or incomplete efforts. In his two-volume biography, published in 1822, William Johnson was uncritical and careless with the facts. George Washington Greene, the general's grandson, was more accurate and objective in his three-volume biography which appeared in 1876, but this did not fulfill his dream of publishing an extensive

collection of Nathanael Greene papers. The 1960 biography by Theodore Thayer is scholarly and satisfactory, but it is limited by the accessibility of Greene materials at the time. There remain gaps and points which need clarification.

By the time of publication of this volume, the editors had assembled photo copies of some ten thousand letters to and from Greene and documents originated by him. More than ninety percent of them concern the American Revolution, exceeded in number from an American general only by the papers of George Washington. There are also variant copies for a large proportion of the total number. This is the first of a projected five volumes of selected letters and documents interlarded with calendared citations for the rest. When publication is complete, it is planned to issue a microfilm of all of the papers. This will include a "typed counterpart" for each document.

The documentation, both from a quantitative and a qualitative standpoint, is an outstanding feature of this volume. Sometimes the documentation is more valuable than the document itself. Not only do the notes clear up evasive references, but they flesh out much that is only alluded to in the text. There is never a suggestion of antiquarianism nor are there details for details sake. In some instances, as in the burning of HMS *Gaspee*, the notes are a substantial and documented essay on an incident or subject.

Cross references abound, not only to other documents within the volume but also to those in other sources. Occasionally the notes themselves contain a complete document or two. Aside from the smaller type of the notes, the documentation of the whole volume is probably greater in size than the documents and calendars that constitute the text. The extreme is five pages of notes, excluding two full-page illustrations, for a one-page Greene letter to Henry Knox. Familiarity with these features make this volume reasonably easy to use. A fine analytical index gives it even greater utility.

The papers themselves present an unfortunate situation. Greene was born in 1742; the first document is dated 1766. After that, the first nine years in this collection are represented by an average of only five documents for each. Sparseness in the papers does not end until his military career began in mid-1775. Papers for his early life were probably never very abundant; at any rate, they are now virtually nonexistent. No satisfactory explanation has ever been made of this, especially for records concerning "his supposed place" in the legislature of Rhode Island. The bulk of the coverage in this first volume is for the first year and one half of the Revolution. This saturation will continue in subsequent installments.

Greene devoted his energies to a wide variety of concerns. They range from card playing among the troops and the propriety of their nude swimming to views on nationalism and the justice of the cause of the Revolution; from the value of the study of history to the importance of vegetables; from reform of the commissary department to the merits of retreat from New York; and from his estimate of Benedict Arnold to the need for additional powers to Washington. There are over fifty letters to Washington and several from him. Greene's correspondents include military and government leaders

of all levels concerned with the progress of the Revolution as well as friends and acquaintances involved in more personal and private matters.

This superbly edited installment of the Nathanael Greene papers will not change the generally accepted sequence of the unfolding drama of the American Revolution. It fleshes out some details and corrects some misconceptions and misinformation. Importantly, it gives another point of view on the Revolution and a closer look at the man whose role in American history was of some consequence. It supplies a veritable cache of new material, even though the editors caution that a fresh biography and a new history of the times are still needed.

—Dwight L. Smith
Miami University

Two Centuries of American Agriculture, edited by Vivian Wiser. Washington: The Agricultural History Society, 1976. pp. vi, 315. \$8.00.

American agricultural history is a curious sub-discipline. Its natural constituency continues to shrink, both relatively and absolutely, and fewer and fewer colleges offer it to their students, yet it retains the interest and devotion of a band of energetic followers. The very term agricultural history raises visions of parochialism, yet a remarkably diverse group of academic historians, social and natural scientists, bureaucrats, and laymen are interested in it. Their eager acceptance of advanced historical tools like quantification and statistical analysis counteracts the notion that agricultural historians are backward, yet they remain largely uninterested in important major fields such as social history. This volume, composed of the twenty-three papers and comments presented at the Bicentennial Symposium on Two Centuries of American Agriculture held at the Smithsonian Institution in April of 1975, reflects the idiosyncrasies of agricultural history.

It will come as no surprise to the reader that the pieces contained in this volume vary greatly in quality, just as the contributors varied greatly in profession, training, and preparation. There are several provocative articles here which stimulate the reader's interest by exploring important areas of concern and advancing tentative answers to the questions raised. Two particularly valuable articles, for example, deal with agricultural contact between different societies. In "Agriculture, Indians, and American History," Thomas R. Wessel sketches a paradoxical pattern of white adoption of specific Indian techniques in the context of a general white misunderstanding and denigration of Indian agriculture. And in "The Impact of America on English Agriculture," C. Andrew Jewell deals with the effect of American implement design and technology on British manufacturers. Hopefully, both of these authors will continue and expand the work they have started here.

This volume is also enriched by two provocative articles on the future of American agriculture. The most controversial article in the collection is

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